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THE NATURAL RIGHT TO FREEDOM. By M. D. O'Brien. London: Williams & Norgate. Pp. 388.

The novelty of this book consists in the violence of the language with which the ordinary principles of Individualism are enforced. This feature may be partly attributable to the necessities of the case. Since the State is "a bogie set up to frighten fools" (p. 10), and the "politicians and socialists" who are responsible for its establishment are alike condemned as a mixture of rascality and insanity, it at once follows that the qualities of integrity and common sense are narrowed down to an exclusively individualistic sphere. So obvious is this, that all the author has to do, in order to make his convictions forcible, is to abuse the shortcomings of others. This is a sample of the way in which he addresses "this 'society,' humanity, community, or whatever you may please to call so general a mass of folly and corruption":

"Noisy crowd of low, base natures! brave mass of trembling units! go down the broad road to your congenial hell of national torpidity and ultimate racial extinction. Miserable shams! conventional puppets! moral and intellectual pygmies! The brand of inferiority is on you forever. You hate and fear principles. Liberty is too bracing for your namby-pamby, maudlin unmanliness. You prefer the lusts of your bellies to the dictates of supreme reason." (p. 91.)

And, speaking of the same object, two pages later,—

"Some say that even in spite of all these 'virtues' it is still going fast to hell. But this is by no means certain. Indeed it is extremely doubtful whether the gentlemen below stairs would lower themselves to associate with so incorrigible a mass of depravity. Even 'auld Nickie Ben' must draw the line somewhere."

I quote these remarks, not from a belief that they are smart, or even funny, but in order to show that Mr. O'Brien has chosen controversial weapons of such potency that he is not likely to provoke an antagonist. For he applies his method of commentary not only to society in general but to individuals, and assails particular writers of repute, for some of whom even "hell is too good" (p. 295), with all the language he can command; and that is not inconsiderable.

The text is marred by numerous misprints, and it is interesting to notice that even the grammar of the writer betrays traces of individualism, whereof the sentence "It would be wrong for you and I to interfere with the work of our neighbours" is not the only example. It would be difficult to say in what respects Messrs. Williams & Norgate are to be congratulated on their new publication.

ARTHUR EASTWOOD.